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Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

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Week of June 25, 2007

USAGE OF FEED GRAIN AND FORAGE LISTING SERVICE PICKING UP

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food's Feed Grain and Forage Listing Service remains available to match producers with feed for sale with those with a feed shortage.

The service is available to farmers throughout Saskatchewan, as well as those from neighbouring provinces and states like Alberta, Manitoba, Montana and North Dakota – all at no charge to users.

The tool also provides postings for popular custom farm services such as grazing and feeding, cutting and baling, seeding, spraying, trucking, combining, grain drying and manure hauling.

"The season usually starts with the standing crops that are for sale," said Andre Bonneau, a Forage Conversion Specialist with SAF. "I'm getting the sense this year that there is more interest in putting up custom grazing listings."

The listing contains interactive maps that enable users to see, by rural municipality, where there are postings for available baled forage, standing forage, feed grain and various custom services. A complete listing for the entire province is also accessible.

"The nice thing about it is you can look at the whole province and compare prices," Bonneau stated. "You can also get very close to home, to the point where you may very well know the person who is selling to you through the site."

To advertise a product or service, or to browse the listings, internet users can visit the SAF website at www.agr.gov.sk.ca and click on "Feed Grain and Forage Listing Service" under the "Programs and Services" link.

Farmers who do not have internet access can call SAF's Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377 to have items posted for sale on their behalf or to have a copy of the listing sent to them.

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IRRIGATED PASTURES OFFER MANY BENEFITS TO PRODUCERS

With the expansion of the livestock industry in Saskatchewan, many producers are searching for new ways to meet their forage and pasture needs. Depending upon the region of Saskatchewan in which they reside, irrigated pastures may be a good option for them.

Charlotte Ward, a Forage Development Specialist with Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, states that a good irrigated pasture in Western Canada can produce more than 25 times the forage per acre that native grassland yields, and seven to 10 times more forage than cultivated dryland pasture.

"Irrigated pastures may still experience yearly and seasonal variations in forage yield and quality, but not to the same extent as dryland pastures," Ward said. "The greatest potential for increased forage production is on good, well-drained soils where water supply is not restricted throughout the growing season."

Grasses are quite often used as the basis of irrigated pastures because they are predictable and easy to manage. Legumes such as alfalfa have also been included, since they provide added nutritional value and decrease the need for nitrogen fertilizer. Using a legume such as cicer milkvetch eliminates the risk of bloat, which may be a concern if livestock are grazing young, vegetative alfalfa.

"Pastures need about 60 centimetres of water during the growth season," Ward noted. "Very few areas in Saskatchewan can meet that requirement without the use of irrigation."

On established pastures, the amount of water applied at once will depend upon the system's capabilities. Ward says most producers have their systems set to administer between three-quarters and an inch of water in one application, usually applying 12 to 14 inches of irrigated water throughout the growing season.

"Because soil's water-holding capacity varies with soil type, irrigation strategies will have to account for the fact that grasses get most of their water from the top 30 centimetres of the soil," she said. "As a result, in sandy loam, the soil may only be able to hold a four-to-six-day supply of water to that depth at the peak demand of the season."

(more)

It is also recommended that irrigation be timed to occur after grazing, haying or fertilizer treatment in order to ensure that moisture stress does not limit pasture regrowth. Watering can occur while cattle are grazing other paddocks to ensure that the soil-water capacity is being met.

On grass pastures, multiple nitrogen fertilizer applications will be required to maintain high yields. If legumes are included in the pasture, nitrogen fertilization will favour grass growth and decrease the quantity of legumes in the pasture. Pastures which contain at least 50 per cent legumes should not need nitrogen fertilization, but may require phosphorous and other nutrients if soil tests reveal deficiencies.

"Producers will want to carefully weigh the cost of fertilizer and application in relation to additional forage and animal production," Ward noted.

Intensively grazed systems where livestock are moved frequently provide an opportunity for greater overall animal production per acre compared to extensively grazed, irrigated pastures. According to Ward, the timing of rotations is important to maximizing productivity.

"If cattle are allowed to graze forages too close to the ground, recovery after grazing will be delayed. If cattle are allowed to graze too lightly, forages will mature too quickly before the next grazing cycle," she stated.

"A number of producers have had success limiting cattle to only two to four days worth of pasture at one time, which allows for longer plant recovery periods compared to pastures that are allowed to be grazed for durations of greater than a week."

Some producers divide their pasture into multiple paddocks to allow for management of surplus forage in the spring. Another strategy to maintain the same herd size throughout the grazing season is to set aside one-third to one-half of the pasture area to be harvested once as silage or hay. This will allow usage of the forage before it is fully mature and allow timely regrowth for grazing later in the season.

Another suggestion is to avoid grazing while the ground is still wet from irrigation. "Grazing wet ground will result in greater trampling and soil compaction, and may lead to a loss of desirable species," Ward said.

"Also, as with all grazing, herd health must be monitored continuously, as concentrating livestock on a small area may lead to an increase in the incidence of diseases such as pink eye or foot rot."

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PARTNERSHIP A WIN-WIN FOR AGRI-BUSINESSES AND STUDENTS

A sustained partnership between the Saskatchewan Council for Community Development (SCCD) and the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) will continue to benefit both the provincial agri-food sector and post-secondary students this year.

Since the demand is high in the agriculture and agri-food industries for individuals with knowledgeable and creative marketing skills, the SCCD and the U of S are once again teaming up to provide agri-businesses with the opportunity to have a professional business and marketing plan crafted for their operations.

SCCD Value Chain Specialist Bryan Kosteroski says the demand for marketing skills is coming from a positive place.

"The agri-food industry in Saskatchewan is growing. A lot of product development has happened, and these companies are now looking at developing marketing strategies to move their commercialized product to the retail marketplace," he said.

The program, the Agri-business Student Business and Marketing Plan Program, allows enterprises to access a comprehensive but affordable business or marketing plan, while at the same time allowing U of S students to gain valuable hands-on experience.

Kosteroski says that is a win-win for both the students and the businesses.

"The students are doing a great job on these marketing plans. They are a stepping stone for the development of more in-depth marketing plans, so they are also giving some good focus to Saskatchewan agri-food companies," he stated.

The plans are formulated by third- and fourth-year U of S students from the College of Agriculture and Bioresources who have studied this area of expertise. The students work alongside the clients to structure a plan that is tailored to the individual needs of their specific enterprise. The initiative is supervised by professors Bill Brown and Tom Allen.

(more)

The program will expand this year to include 15 business plans and 15 marketing plans produced in each of three upcoming school terms.

Participating businesses will pay $250 of the $500 total cost of the service, with the other $250 subsidized by SCCD through funding from the federal Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Saskatchewan (ACAAFS) initiative.

A further opportunity for both agriculture and agri-food businesses and the students is the new partnership between the Agri-business Student Business and Marketing Plan Program and the Agri-Value Marketing Internship Program funded by Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF). This valuable link will connect graduates of the program with businesses looking for marketing assistance.

The Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership (STEP), which is administering the initiative on behalf of SAF, will keep a database of names and contact information on U of S graduates that businesses will be able to access when seeking employees.

Application forms for the Business and Marketing Plan Program will be available on the Value Chain section of the SCCD website at www.sccd.sk.ca/valuechains. More information is available by contacting SCCD toll free at 1-800-641-8256 or by e-mailing info@sccd.sk.ca.

Agri-food businesses requiring more information on the marketing assistance available through the SAF-funded Agri-Value Marketing Internship Program can visit the STEP website at www.sasktrade.sk.ca or call 1-877-313-7244.

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GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR RURAL WOMEN TO MAKE POSITIVE CHANGES

Grants are now available to rural and farm women who are willing to take action and make positive changes in their communities.

The main goal of the Rural Women's Issues Committee of Saskatchewan (RWICS) Action Grant program is to enable women to address the main concerns of their specific communities, create a vision and a plan, and then put that plan into action locally. Further steps include interacting on a provincial or national level to realize those visions on a larger scale.

RWICS released a report in 2004 entitled "Rural, Remote and Northern Women's Health," encompassing a study conducted across Canada. The report contained a number of recommendations to increase the body of research pertaining to rural and farm woman.

It was found that the role of rural and farm women often consists of a triple or quadruple workload, including duties such as care giving, managing farm employment, helping on the farm themselves, looking after the household, and contributing to the community.

One of the key concerns identified was that the health of rural and farm women is often adversely affected by where they live. "Negative effects such as lack of confidentiality and fewer choices for services play a part," said Joanne Havelock of RWICS. "In rural, remote areas, women are also more dependent on primary industries, which tend to experience a variation in income and often income difficulties. This has proven to be very stressful for women."

To further explore the area, RWICS organized several workshops that were held in the province over the past two years. These workshops looked at the concerns brought on by the report and uncovered further challenges that rural and farm women commonly face.

Among the topics discussed were leadership and networking among women, focusing on caring for themselves, the farm income problem, community kitchens, the environment and recycling, and the need to build links between farmers and city consumers, seniors and youth of all cultures.

(more)

"The women involved showed a great appreciation to get together, talk out these issues, and think about what they might do to act on them in a positive way to create a positive change," Havelock said.

"Our intent in providing the grant program is to give women in those communities an opportunity to take that action and start making those positive changes required for their local community."

Grants vary from $250 to $500 per project. "With these amounts, we are not expecting a huge initiative, but some local action that relates to the issues identified in the workshops," she added.

The type of projects that will receive funding will be focused on creating positive action towards a situation that enhances the wellbeing of women and their communities.

Havelock says it is important to give rural women a chance to do something that focuses on their needs. "Rural women are doing a lot of things for other people. I think they appreciate that role, but we need to look at issues from their viewpoint," she stated.

"These grants will give them an opportunity to work locally and to address some of the issues facing rural communities that have been identified as being significant."

Over 300 recommendations were generated by participants at the workshops. The report from the exercise is posted on the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence website at www.pwhce.ca. Readers are also able to look at the specific report for their particular area.

Rural and farm women who are interested in applying for the grants can contact Joanne Havelock at (306) 585-5727 or e-mail pwhce@uregina.ca. A short application package will be sent to them.

The final deadline to apply for funding is September 14.

"It is important that rural and farm women have a voice and that the diversity between them is used to promote positive changes in their local communities," Havelock said. "This program is giving women the opportunity to do just that."

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SASKATCHEWAN FRUIT ORCHARDS: ENJOY A MOUTH-WATERING EXPERIENCE

The time of the year has come to prepare for a mouth-watering adventure. The Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association (SFGA) is once again presenting its annual Summer Tour and Field Day, to be held on July 7.

The event focuses on bringing awareness of the province's commercial fruit orchards.

This year, the tour will highlight two farms in east-central Saskatchewan: one in the Preeceville area and one near Yorkton.

The first stop is Fatikaki Farms of Preeceville, owned by Pat and Jeanette Meerholz and managed by Herman Meerholz. "The farm offers quite a site – over 60 acres of Smokey, Thiessen, Honeywood and Martin saskatoons," noted SFGA Executive Director Charon Blakley.

The farm also grows five acres of Valentine, Evans, Carmine Jewel and Mongolian sour cherries, and one-and-a-half acres of blue honeysuckle, as well as apples for their personal use.

A variety of equipment will be displayed, including a mechanical harvester and a tree planter, plus other equipment required for orchard management.

After a lunch served at Chris's Place in Preeceville, attendees will head to the second stop, Prairie Dome Strawberries just outside of Yorkton. The farm is owned and operated by Elwin, Marie and Tonia Vermette and Kirk Flaman, and features a variety of fruit.

Attendees will experience the two-and-a-half acre deep-planted Smokey and Martin saskatoon orchard in various production stages, as well as two acres of newly planted and five acres of established Kent and Cavendish strawberries.

The farm will also display several pieces of equipment, including a complete line of strawberry production equipment, saskatoon spraying equipment, and drip and overhead irrigation systems for strawberries.

(more)

The tour welcomes both SFGA members and non-members. Blakley stated that the purpose of the event is to create a hands-on experience for individuals. "They will learn what it takes to grow a successful orchard and see how an established orchard functions," she said.

"If individuals are looking to establish their own orchards, they will be able to take some good information home and apply it themselves. Even experienced fruit growers find they can pick up a few tips." Individuals will also have a chance to speak with other attendees during the tour and learn from their experiences.

The tour will be led by Clarence Peters, the provincial specialist for fruit crops with Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food.

"Individuals who have an interest in growing fruit and would like to learn more about what it takes should attend the event, as well as those who are just interested in taking a look at the processes used to establish a fruit orchard that grows produce available to the national consumer," said Blakley.

The SFGA has been incorporated since 1988, and currently has over 150 members. It is a grower-directed association dedicated to the production and marketing of premium quality Saskatchewan-grown fruit, and the development of a strong and vibrant fruit industry.

To meet industry needs, the SFGA works with researchers, government, processors and consumers. They collaborate with these stakeholders on research, market development, quality standards and other initiatives.

If you are interested in learning more about the SFGA or registering for the annual Summer Tour and Field Day, visit the association's website at www.saskfruit.com, or call toll-free 1-877-97-FRUIT (1-877-973-7848).

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